

Introverts and Extroverts in Personal Relationships

The Introvert Advantage, by Marti Olsen Laney

Many Introverts are married to or in partnership or friendship with Extroverts.

The goal in relationships is not to think alike, but to think together.

The way a couple handles the conflicts or differences determines how long their relationship lasts and how satisfied they are. Differences are an opportunity to strengthen the bond between a couple when they are viewed as an expression of the other person's character or personality type instead of as a rejection or attack.

How to Talk To Your Introverted Partner

1. Make a date to discuss how the two of you can relate better together to give Introverts time to prepare their thoughts.
2. Don't interrupt. Introverts require energy to start talking again. Hear your partner out, and then talk about your thoughts and feelings.
3. Count to five and think before you speak. An Introvert will remember what you say.
4. Repeat what you heard your partner saying to make it clear you were listening. Ask him/her if your summation is correct.
5. Learn how to sit quietly sometimes in your partner's presence. He/she may have depleted energy, but still wants to be with you.
6. Be sure your partner gets a turn to talk.
7. Ask what your partner's day was like. Sometimes he/she needs to be drawn out.
8. Occasionally communicate in writing. Introverts can take in written words with less overstimulation. Leave a card by the phone, put a note in the lunch container, suitcase, briefcase, pocket, or on the pillow.

How to Talk To Your Extroverted Partner

1. Tell your partner you want to talk, and set a date and time to do so.
2. Practice short, clear sentences to make it easier for your Extrovert partner to listen to you.
3. Don't be afraid to talk loudly if you need to. You may feel overstimulated, but sometimes your more Extroverted partner won't believe that you mean something unless the volume is up.
4. Practice saying anything that pops into your mind. Don't always rehearse.
5. Allow pauses. It's okay not to keep up with an Extroverted partner's nonstop pace.
6. Tell your partner you know it is difficult for him/her to understand that you take time to make decisions and that you don't always say what's on your mind.
7. Write down your feelings on paper and give it to your partner if you feel strongly about an issue but have trouble talking about it.
8. Don't worry if you get overstimulated during or after a disagreement. Feelings are not bad, and they will pass.
9. Tell your partner how you feel about him/her. Your partner wants to hear he/she is cared about. Leave notes and e-mails, and don't forget to give compliments.

Stress or crisis reveals our coping styles, which is why so many relationships end when a powerful event (good or bad) occurs, such as a death, a wedding, a house remodel, an illness, a promotion, a child's leaving home, etc. If the couple can't adjust to the change (stress), the relationship begins to deteriorate.

Steps for Resolving Relationship Conflict

1. One after the other, state what you think the conflict is about.
2. State your Introverted/Extroverted view.
3. Clarify the impasse.
4. Step into the other person's shoes.
5. Negotiate and figure out ways to compromise.